
Biographies

Mark Russell Smith

Conductor

Mark Russell Smith, a 1987 graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, is artistic director of orchestral activities at the University of Minnesota, music director of the Quad City Symphony Orchestra, and artistic director of the Greater Twin Cities Youth Symphonies.

Mr. Smith has conducted the Saint Louis, Houston, Colorado, Eugene, Hartford, Jacksonville, Phoenix, Santa Barbara, Winnipeg, Costa Rica, and Xalapa symphonies; the Minnesota Orchestra; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; Orchestra London (Ontario); and the Tulsa Philharmonic. In 2007, 2012, and 2014 he returned to his alma mater to lead the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in Verizon Hall, and he led Curtis On Tour in China and Korea in 2011. He has conducted the Curtis Opera Theatre and Virginia Opera, and has appeared at the Eastern Music Festival, the Berkshire Choral Festival, and the European Center for Opera and Vocal Art in Ghent, Belgium. Mr. Smith collaborated with Yo-Yo Ma on *Bridge of Souls*, a concert featuring world premieres by Asian and American composers. A firm believer in the use of technical innovation, he annually conducts the final round of the Minnesota International Piano e-Competition, streamed live online.

Mr. Smith was previously music director of the Richmond, Cheyenne, and Springfield symphony orchestras. He studied cello at the Juilliard School with Claus Adam and conducting at the Curtis Institute of Music with Max Rudolf and Otto-Werner Mueller.

Craig Knox

Tuba

Principal tuba of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra since 2005, Craig Knox was previously acting principal tuba of the San Francisco Symphony and principal tuba of the Sacramento Symphony. He has performed with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, Minnesota, Detroit, and Seattle, as well as the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

As a soloist, Mr. Knox premiered Jennifer Higdon's Tuba Concerto and André Previn's Triple Concerto for trumpet, horn, and tuba, both with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared as a soloist with the U.S. Army Band "Pershing's Own" and the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, and has toured with the Empire Brass. He is co-founder of the Center City Brass Quintet, which has made six recordings for the Chandos and Cryston labels. He has made recordings for Naxos with the Chicago Chamber Musicians Brass Quintet and for the Albany label with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra low brass section; and has recorded a solo album, *A Road Less Traveled*.

Mr. Knox graduated from the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied with Paul Krzywicki. His previous teachers included Samuel Pilafian, Chester Schmitz, and Gary Ofenloch. He joined the tuba faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in 2014. He also teaches at Carnegie Mellon University and has presented master classes, seminars, and recitals worldwide.

Jennifer Higdon

Composer

Jennifer Higdon is one of the most acclaimed and frequently performed composers working today. She has received the Pulitzer Prize, two Grammy awards for best contemporary classical composition, Guggenheim and Pew fellowships, a commission from the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation, the Nemmers Prize from Northwestern University, and two awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Dr. Higdon has been commissioned by a wide range of performers, including the Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Minnesota orchestras; the Chicago and Pittsburgh symphony orchestras; the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra; “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band; the Tokyo String Quartet; and Eighth Blackbird. She has also been commissioned by individual artists such as baritone Thomas Hampson; violinists Hilary Hahn, Jennifer Koh, and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg; and pianists Gary Graffman and Yuja Wang. Her first opera, *Cold Mountain*, was a resounding success, winning an International Opera Award for best world premiere; the opera’s recording was nominated for two Grammy awards. Her works are recorded on more than 65 CDs.

Dr. Higdon holds a bachelor’s degree in flute performance from Bowling Green State University, an artist diploma in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music, and a master’s degree and Ph.D. in composition from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1994 Dr. Higdon joined the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music, where she holds the Milton L. Rock Chair in Composition Studies.

Yuwon Kim

Conducting Fellow

Yuwon Kim, from Daegu, South Korea, entered the Curtis Institute of Music in 2018. As a conducting fellow, she works closely with Curtis mentor conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. All students at Curtis receive merit-based, full-tuition scholarships, and Ms. Kim is the Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow.

The winner of the 2018 Princess Astrid International Music Competition, Ms. Kim has worked with Tonhalle-Orchester Zurich; the Netherlands, Bad Reichenhaller, and South Czech philharmonics; the North Netherlands, Trondheim, and Prague symphony orchestras; Residentie Orkest The Hague; the Aspen Conducting Academy Orchestra; and the Austrian Ensemble for New Music. She has also assisted Xian Zhang at NJO: Dutch Orchestra and Ensemble Academy and Jac van Steen at Opera North (U.K.). In 2015 Ms Kim was awarded the Holland Scholarship from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, and in 2014 she received the Robert Spano Conductor Prize from the Aspen Music Festival and School.

Ms. Kim holds a bachelor’s degree in composition and conducting from Seoul National University and a Master of Music with distinction from Mozarteum University Salzburg, where she studied conducting with Dennis Russell Davies, Hans Drewanz, Hans Graf, Jorge Rotter, and Bruno Weil. ✕